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LB 407, 540, 574

SENATOR RAIKES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and members. Senator Erdman's amendment, I'm just going to comment a little bit on procedure. I understand that a great deal of work has gone into this. I don't understand why we didn't see it until the moment of the introduction. Now, I would understand if this like...is like my college term papers, if...and that's a long time ago, where you were scratching out the number right up till the last minute. And if that had to be, I understand. But there's an awful lot in here that needs to be digested. And I don't think it makes an efficient use of the time in the Legislature to have to be reading through a 163-page amendment while the discussion is going on. So that's just a comment on procedure. If it was impossible to introduce it and let us know what was there ahead of time, okay, fine. But if it was possible, then I think that's the way it should have been done. I don't think you can run anything past this group by throwing a lot of weight at the last moment. I think at...when it's all said and done, you have to be up-front, and everybody has to know what's involved. So you might as well get an early start on that rather than a late one. What I can gather...and I'm a slow reader, as will be apparent. I appreciate what is being done on LB 540. We've worked very hard on that one, and you all remember how cordial I am to amendments on LB 540, but I appreciate him keeping that in place, as with LB 574. Again, I think we worked very hard to get that where it is, and so I appreciate him leaving those in place. I also would commend him very strongly on what he's doing with the smoking cessation or prevention program. It's not...and I suspect Senator Erdman would agree. It's not that smoking cessation is a bad program, obviously not the case. But in this environment, you have to start someplace. And if you can't do that, then I...my hopes dim considerably. Senator Pedersen mentioned state wards, and I think this is definitely something to be concerned about. There...of the \$80 million reduction, about 8.5 of that comes from state wards, I think, if I've read that correctly. In effect, this is making arrangements with providers of educational services, like Girls and Boys Town, and simply not paying them, as I understand. I don't think we can do that. So I'll need to look at that, but I have great concerns about that. The other thing is higher education. I think Senator Beutler pointed out that a big part